

II READ

Now carefully and slowly read "Eyewitness to the Boston Tea Party."

1. Clarify the main events described.
2. Write important details about the Boston Tea Party in the Response Notes.

"Eyewitness to the Boston Tea Party" by Wesley S. Griswold

RESPONSE NOTES

The raiders were predominantly young. Only seven of them were over forty. Of those whose age at the time could later be determined, sixteen were in their thirties, thirty-eight were in their twenties, and fifteen were teen-agers. The youngest contingent consisted entirely of apprentices. They had not been taken into consideration when the plans were being laid. Unable to resist the allure of whistles and warwhoops in the street, they simply joined the Party on the spur of the moment, for a lark. Most of them were not disguised. Indeed, many of the older men were only partially so, having done no more than discolor their faces.

EXAMPLE:

Most who took part were young.

The decision had apparently been made at the secret session of the Committees of Correspondence from five towns held in Faneuil Hall on December 13th to have three groups of men, including the leaders of the raid, don makeshift Indian attire for the occasion. It was truly a crude disguise, consisting mostly of

VOCABULARY

predominantly—mostly.
contingent—group of troops.
apprentices—beginners.
allure—attraction.
warwhoops—loud shouts or yells.
for a lark—on a whim.
Faneuil Hall—a meeting place in Boston, Massachusetts.
don makeshift Indian attire—wear clothes like Native Americans wear.

RESPONSE NOTES

"Eyewitness to the Boston Tea Party" CONTINUED

ragged clothes, any sort of hood for the head and shoulders, and some obscuring color for the face and hands. Headgear included blankets, shawls, cast-off dresses, and red woolen caps. Skin colors ranged from red ochre, through a mixture of that pigment with lampblack and axle grease, to pure soot. If anyone wore a feathered headband, no contemporary account mentioned it.

stop and think

What are the disguises for?

The three groups assembled in separate parts of town and began putting on their costumes and makeup during the short afternoon of December 16th. . . . By dark, they were ready to make their way to a designated rendezvous on Fort Hill. . . .

. . . Robert Sessions, writing in his old age, provided particularly vivid recollections of the scene:

I was living in Boston at the time, in the family of a Mr. Davis, a lumber merchant, as a common laborer. On that eventful evening, when Mr. Davis

VOCABULARY

obscuring—darkening.

ochre—reddish clay mixture.

pigment with lampblack—color that uses fine black soot (the lampblack) that comes from burning oil in lamps.

contemporary—current.

assembled—gathered.

rendezvous—meeting point.

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"Eyewitness to the Boston Tea Party" CONTINUED

came in from the town meeting, I asked him what was to be done with the tea.

"They are now throwing it overboard," he replied.

Receiving permission, I went immediately to the spot. Everything was as light as day, by the means of lamps and torches; a pin might be seen lying on the wharf. I went on board where they were at work, and took hold with my own hands.

RESPONSE NOTES

stop and think

Who is telling this story?

I was not one of those appointed to destroy the tea, and who disguised themselves as Indians, but was a volunteer, the disguised men being largely men of family and position in Boston, while I was a young man whose home and relations were in Connecticut. The appointed and disguised party proving too small for the quick work necessary, other young men, similarly circumstanced with myself, joined them in their labors.

The chests were drawn up by a tackle—one man bringing them forward [in the hold], another putting a rope around them, and others hoisting them to the deck and carrying them to the vessel's side. The chests were then opened, the tea emptied over the side, and the chests thrown overboard.

VOCABULARY

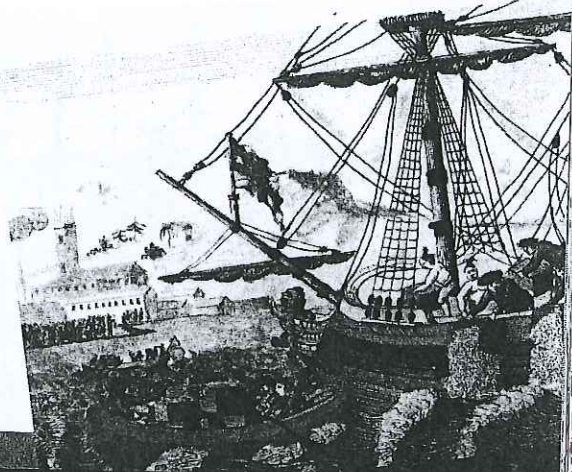
wharf—pier where ships load and unload.

similarly circumstanced—sharing the same situation (in this case, being unknown and not from the Boston area).

tackle—rope.

hoisting—lifting.

vessel's—ship's.



RESPONSE NOTES

"Eyewitness to the Boston Tea Party" CONTINUED

Perfect regularity prevailed during the whole transaction. Although there were many people on the wharf, entire silence prevailed—no clamor, no talking. Nothing was meddled with but the teas on board.

After having emptied the whole, the deck was swept clean, and everything put in its proper place. An officer on board was requested to come up from the cabin and see that no damage was done except to the tea. . . .

VOCABULARY

prevailed—won out.

meddled—bothered; disturbed.

stop and think

What was the purpose of the "tea party"?

Was the party wild and out-of-control or peaceful and orderly? How do you know?

